UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

UTNMF Electroacoustic Concert

Friday, January 30, 2026 at 7:30 pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

Raw Data Speed Demons (2025) — Nolan Hildebrand (b. 1992)

Roan Ma, Violin

threnody for rocking chair (2025) — Robert Humber (b. 1995)

Farewell, Fairlight (2021) — Manuela Blackburn (b. 1984)

INTERMISSION

Quondam, Apparatus (2023) — Michele Selvaggi (b. 2000)

Le Flûteur (2025) — Luke Blackmore (b. 1999)

Bellow (2021) — Panayiotis Kokoras (b. 1974)

Matti Pulkki, Accordion

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.
As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures. Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

PROGRAM NOTES

Raw Data Speed Demons is an interactive electroacoustic work for violin and electronics. In the piece, the violin interacts with a computer, triggering random changes to a sampler containing hundreds of harsh and noisy raw data sonifications. These samples change chaotically at blistering speeds and (to me) evoke images of mischievous digital demons—hence the title. The violinist is instructed to mimic and battle the chaotic sampling system, creating a perceptible dialogue between performer and machine.

threnody for rocking chair began its life as an outdoor contemporary dance piece which took place along a stretch of abandoned railroad track in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. The work was commissioned by Candice Pike in Motion.

As a Newfoundlander-living-away, I was experiencing the island in short bursts: flying home every so often to work on a creative project, visit family and leave again. Whenever I was home, it felt right, like a place I belonged. Leaving was difficult. I set out to make threnody for rocking chair reflect the sense of disconnectedness I was dealing with. On one hand, I utilized many folk instruments with personal, sentimental value to create the sounds: my father's first guitar, his barely-functional double bass, my mother's harmonicas, the baby grand piano I spent many summers playing in the small town of Woody Point, NL during work contracts. I ran long, improvisational tracks through an old 4-track cassette recorder to create a warm, saturated, slightly "broken" sound which, to my ears, gives the sense of music half-remembered, deteriorating in real time. All these elements lead to a warm, connected and spontaneous sound. On the other hand, those takes were then harshly chopped and digitally rearranged in a way that suggests electronic music. Although every sound on the album is completely acoustic, the way the material is treated gives the impression of unreality. It is on this line, the line between warmth and cold, contentment and dread, connectedness and disconnectedness, that threnody for rocking chair steps.

[Farewell Fairlight] exclusively makes use of sounds sourced from the Fairlight CMI. These sounds include the factory pre-recorded samples which came loaded on 8-inch floppy disks for the Fairlight CMI Series II from its manufacturer in 1982.

Other sounds are derived from the mechanics and internal workings of the Fairlight, for example, the turn key (power switch), power up and power down sounds, the innovative light-pen making contact with the monitor screen, the drop down panel, disks loading/reading and the unmistakably loud fan noise emanating from the instrument. These mechanical sounds were sourced from the Fairlight CMI IIx housed in the Clock House at Keele University, UK where I worked between 2019 and '21.

The work fundamentally explores a historically important and treasured sound library that defined the sound of 80s pop. The legendary bottle smash, ORCH 2, and Trevor Horn stabs are just some of these well known Fairlight sounds that now feature in new

configurations in this work. These samples are reimagined with musique concrète techniques, layered, processed and looped to create a new montage.

© 2021, Manuella Blackburn (PRS) / Ymx média (SOCAN)
℗ 2024, Enregistrements i média (SOPROQ)
Released on the album *Interruptions,* empreintes DIGITALes, IMED 24194

Quondam, Apparatus was written for the Musik-Akademie Basel in collaboration with Museum Tinguely. This work emerged as a continued exploration into sonic entropy, as well as—at the time—a newfound investigation into acoustic recreations of real environments; in this case, I was seeking to recreate the kinetic machines of Jean Tinguely. Before writing, I was provided machine samples, courtesy of Museum Tinguely, each with their own character. I ordered these recordings in space based on entropic relation to one another—taking into account spectral content, structure, and complexity—making, in essence, a mechanical web through which the work was to travel.

The machines exist as singular beings in the museum; however, I wanted to pull each entity out of its physical and temporal context, arranging a larger, saturated conglomerate that stretched and evolved over time. Often, the inner movements of the machines are explored microscopically, represented by instruments, or revealed through acoustic filtering. Seven transducers attached to the piano and to percussion instruments allow for specific sonic components to enter the performance space; this filtering allows each machine to be transformed by the instrumental material itself, where it can then be doubly re-interpreted by the players in a feedback loop. In addition, a live Tinguely Machine becomes its own player, working with the ensemble cloud to form a hyper-machine.

Le Flûteur is a fixed-media meditation on automation, machine/human interaction, and the dichotomy between live performance and recorded musical material. The work is inspired by the sculpture of the same name first showcased in 1738 by French inventor Jacques Vaucanson. The sculpture consisted of an automaton, or android, which was controlled through a series of mechanical processes hidden in the large platform on which the automaton sat. Using a real flute being controlled by the automaton, *Le Flûteur* could play twelve different melodies by blowing air through constructed lips, articulating with a valve-controlled tongue, and covering the flute's holes with mechanical fingers covered in organic human skin.
My composition makes exclusive use of pre-recorded flute samples which are distorted electronically to resemble the soundscape of pre-industrial machinery, such as those which operated *Le Flûteur*.

Bellow was completed in Spring 2021 and commissioned by Ensemble Klangforum Wien's accordionist, Krassimir Sterev. At its heart, the composition explores themes of mental imagery, sound transformation, and transcontextuality. The accordion, in combination with electronics, transforms into an array of evocative soundscapes. These

include the resonant echoes of Leslie train horns, the low rumble of cow bellows, the sharp impact of kickboxing punches, the flutter of flapping wings, the rhythmic clatter of a manual typewriter, and the majestic organ sonorities reminiscent of Messiaen's Livre du Saint Sacrement.

The electronics extend the traditional sonic boundaries of the accordion, merging the acoustic and electronic realms into a unified sonic environment. The piece is meticulously crafted to allow the performer to interact seamlessly with the electronics, creating an organic blend where the distinctions between the two dissolve. Rather than relying on a click track, the piece invites performers to immerse themselves fully in the sound world, fostering a dynamic and interactive performance experience akin to a concerto, where the soloist and the orchestra become one.

Several artistic influences converge within Bellow, including a fascination with animal vocalizations, field recordings, and timbral transformation. The piece draws inspiration from the interplay of the accordion's bellows and the bellow of a cow, weaving these sounds into a rich tapestry of mimicry, timbral manipulation, spatialization, juxtaposition, repetition, and variation.